

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

South Valley Facilities Expansion Environmental Impact Statement

SCOPING REPORT

OCTOBER 2008



U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Lower Colorado Region

SOUTH VALLEY FACILITIES EXPANSION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SCOPING REPORT

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FINAL



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
HBA	Hauge Brueck Associates
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
NPS	National Park Service
Reclamation	Bureau of Reclamation
RMWTF	River Mountains Water Treatment Facility
SNWA	Southern Nevada Water Authority
SVFE	South Valley Facilities Expansion
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Southern Nevada Water Authority (SNWA) has requested authorization to construct, operate, and maintain water treatment and conveyance facilities on public lands administered by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and National Park Service (NPS) in Clark County, Nevada. The Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Region is the lead federal agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the South Valley Facilities Expansion (SVFE) project proposed by the SNWA.

2.0 PROPOSED PROJECT

The mission of the SNWA is to manage the region's water resources and develop solutions that will ensure adequate future water supplies for the Las Vegas Valley. The SNWA is the regional agency tasked with meeting the water supply demand projections of their water purveyor member agencies in Southern Nevada. The responsibilities of the SNWA include water supply management, conservation, ensuring water quality as determined by state and federal standards, allocating and distributing supplies among water purveyors, representing Southern Nevada on water issues, building and operating regional facilities to provide a reliable drinking water delivery system to member agencies, and long-term water resource planning.

The purpose for the SVFE is to assist the SNWA with its responsibility of allocating and distributing water supplies among the water purveyors. The Las Vegas Valley Water District and the City of Henderson, both water purveyors, have indicated a need to meet evolving water supply demand projections and patterns in the southern area of the Las Vegas Valley through 2035. The SNWA proposes to expand existing raw water transmission and treatment facilities and construct a new treated water conveyance system to redistribute existing water supplies to meet the projected needs at the distribution locations identified by these purveyors.

The SVFE is an expansion of raw water transmission and treatment facilities, and construction of a new system to convey treated water to the southern area of the Las Vegas Valley. Raw water transmission would include a new pipeline (approximately 120-inch diameter) and pumps to redistribute raw water from existing sources at Lake Mead to the River Mountains Water Treatment Facility (RMWTF). Treatment capacity and pumping station capacity at RMWTF would be expanded by 300 million gallons per day within its existing footprint.

The treated water conveyance system of the SVFE is referred to as the McCullough Lateral. The McCullough Lateral would interconnect with the South Valley Lateral, which is an existing system that conveys water supplies to the southern Las Vegas Valley. This interconnection would allow areas to be served from either lateral if maintenance, repair, or power outage prevents use of one lateral. The South Valley Lateral does not have sufficient capacity to meet the water supply demand projections nor serve locations identified by water purveyors. The purpose for another lateral and planned interconnection would be to increase the reliability of the overall water supply system and to provide flexibility in meeting projected seasonal and regional water demands in locations identified by the City of Henderson and Las Vegas Valley Water District.

McCullough Lateral would include construction of approximately 26 miles of underground pipeline from RMWTF to a location west of Interstate 15 in the vicinity of Cactus Avenue and Decatur Boulevard. The pipeline will be 72- to 114-inch diameter and designed to provide sufficient capacity to meet projected



demands through 2035. Appurtenant facilities of the McCullough Lateral would include a 40-million gallon storage reservoir, rate-of-flow control stations, and a pumping station.

Potential project alternatives include different pipeline alignments, different pipeline construction methods (trench excavation and tunneling), and different locations for pumping stations, storage reservoirs, and other appurtenant facilities.

3.0 SCOPING PROCESS

Scoping is the term used in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA [40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Parts 1500 et. seq.] to define the early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in an EIS. The scoping process serves a number of purposes. The primary purpose of scoping is to provide an avenue to involve the public in identifying significant issues, to share concerns or comments the public may have, and to identify alternatives to be considered during the EIS process. Scoping helps identify issues that are not significant and alternatives that are not feasible, and can thereby be eliminated from detailed analysis in the EIS. The mailing list of interested parties is updated and expanded during the scoping process.

The scoping process for the SVFE EIS encompassed a number of activities as described in the following sections.

3.1 Cooperating Agencies

Reclamation invited BLM and NPS to be cooperating agencies in the NEPA process for the SVFE. As defined by the CEQ regulations, a cooperating agency is one that has special expertise and/or has jurisdiction by law. Both BLM and NPS will make decisions on issuing rights-of-way for the SVFE on lands under their respective management and are cooperating with Reclamation to identify environmental issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS.

3.2 Notice of Intent

The Notice of Intent (NOI) is the official forum to notify the public of Reclamation's intent to prepare an EIS for a major federal action. The NOI invites the participation of affected and interested agencies, organizations, and members of the public in determining the scope and significant issues to be addressed and analyzed in the EIS. The scoping period for the SVFE EIS officially began with the publication of the NOI in the Federal Register (Vol. 73, No. 76) on April 18, 2008. The close of the scoping period was May 23, 2008. A copy of the NOI is included in Appendix A.

3.3 Public Scoping Notice

A public scoping notice letter was prepared by Reclamation and mailed on April 16, 2008 to federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials, Native American tribal representatives, BLM Resource Advisory Council members, homeowner associations, businesses, and special interest organizations. A brief description of the SVFE and a map showing potential alternative locations were attached to the letter. A postcard reminder notice of the three public scoping meetings was mailed on April 24, 2008 to the same addresses that received the letter. The list of 304 addresses for both mailings was compiled using input from Reclamation, NPS, BLM, and the SNWA. The mailing lists are included in Appendix C.



The notices served to inform the public about the scoping process for the preparation of the SVFE EIS and the three scheduled scoping meetings. It invited the public to participate in the scoping process and to share concerns or comments, submit information, and identify issues to be addressed during the preparation of the EIS. The public was invited to submit comments to Reclamation. Copies of the public scoping notice letter and postcard are included in Appendix C.

3.4 Project Websites

Reclamation maintains a website (<http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g2000/envdocs.html>) for posting environmental documents for projects occurring in the Lower Colorado Region. The Federal Register NOI, Potential Facility Locations and Alignment Map, and News Release for the SVFE were posted on this site. The SNWA has specific project information about the SVFE and general information about the NEPA process on their website (http://www.snwa.com/html/system_svfe_about.html) with a link to the SVFE environmental documents on Reclamation's website.

3.5 Media

Reclamation prepared a news release announcing the scoping meetings and inviting the public to provide input. A news blast was sent via facsimile to local media the day of the scheduled scoping meetings. The news release and news blast were provided to the print and broadcast media listed in Table 1. Media that received the news release from Reclamation are indicated in the table by an asterisk. A public meeting notice was published in the legal section of the Las Vegas Review-Journal on April 25, 2008 and a paid advertisement was published in the Las Vegas-Review Journal on May 4, 2008. The Las Vegas Review-Journal printed a news article announcing the meetings on May 6, 2008. The South Valley Home News printed a news article on May 22, 2008 describing the SVFE project and the scoping process. Channel 8 KLAS-TV announced the scoping meetings during the early evening news on Tuesday May 6, 2008 and aired a news story that was taped at the May 8, 2008 public scoping meeting. The story included interviews with Reclamation and a member of the public in attendance. Copies of the press release, legal notice, and advertisement are included in Appendix B.

3.6 Scoping Meetings

Reclamation's Lower Colorado Region Office hosted four scoping meetings in May 2008 for the SVFE EIS including three meetings for the public and one meeting for agencies. Reclamation was assisted at these meetings by representatives from BLM, NPS, the SNWA, the SNWA's engineering consultant (Stanley Consultants), and the EIS consultants, Hauge Brueck Associates (HBA) and MBP Consulting.

3.6.1 Public Scoping Meetings

Three public scoping meetings provided an opportunity for the public to learn about the project and to provide written comments. The meetings were held from 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. each evening. The locations, dates, and number of attendees at each meeting are shown in Table 2.

Scoping meeting attendees were greeted and asked to sign a registration sheet as they entered the meeting room. Handouts were available at the entrance that included information about the SVFE project, environmental resources, EIS process, alternative alignments, and how to comment. Copies of the presentation were available for attendees. These materials are included in Appendix D.

**Table 1****Media Outlets**

Print		
Associated Press*	El Mundo*	Las Vegas Business Press
Anthem View	El Tiempo Libre*	Las Vegas Review-Journal*
Boulder City News*	Green Valley View	Las Vegas Sun*
Construction Connection	Henderson Home News*	Nevada Contractor
Construction Notebook	Henderson View*	
Radio		
KDWN AM 720*	KJUL FM 104.7*	KNPR FM 88.9*
KCEP FM 88.1	KLUC FM 98.5/KMXB FM 94.1	KNUU AM 970*
KDOX AM 1280	KXWT/KXNT AM 840	KOMP FM 92.3
KISF FM 103.5/KLSQ AM 870/ KQMR FM 99.3	KSFN AM 1140	KUNV FM 91.5
KKLZ/KSTJ	KMZQ FM 100.5	KVEG FM 97.5
Television		
BCTV Ch. 142*	KINC Ch. 15*	KTUD Ch. 25
KTNV Ch. 13*	KLAS Ch. 8*	KVBC Ch. 3*
KCLV Ch. 2	KLBC Ch. 2 (Laughlin)*	KVVU Ch. 5*
KBLR – Telemundo Ch. 39	CCTV-4*	

- Received news release from Reclamation; all outlets received news blast.

Table 2**Public Scoping Meeting Locations and Attendance**

Date	Location	Attendance*
Monday May 5, 2008	Valley View Recreation Center 500 Harris Street, Henderson, Nevada	6
Tuesday May 6, 2008	Sun City MacDonald Ranch 2020 W. Horizon Ridge Parkway, Henderson, Nevada	23
Wednesday May 7, 2008	Wingate Hotel 3041 St. Rose Parkway, Henderson, Nevada	11

* Attendance numbers represent the members of the public that signed in at each meeting.



The meeting format was an open house for the first hour to allow attendees to view informational displays and visit with representatives from Reclamation, NPS, BLM, the SNWA, Stanley Consultants, HBA, and MBP Consulting. The informational displays included maps depicting the project area, project parameters, alternative alignments, an overview of the NEPA process, typical construction methods, typical project facilities, and potential biological resources in the project area. These materials are included in Appendix E. An aerial simulation of the project alternative alignments using Google Earth™ was available for attendees to view at any time during the open house.

At 5:30 p.m., a PowerPoint® presentation on the project was given by HBA. The presentation included an overview of the project, an overview of NEPA, an overview of the EIS document, an explanation of the scoping process, the purpose of public scoping, and the public's role in contributing to the EIS process. The presentation is included in Appendix F. The purpose and need for the SVFE, potential alternatives to be addressed in the EIS, and a list of the environmental resources to be addressed were presented. The presentation concluded with the identification of the next steps in the EIS process. Upon completion of the presentation, the attendees were invited to provide written comments, view the displays, and encouraged to continue the dialogue with Reclamation, BLM, NPS, the SNWA, Stanley Consultants and HBA representatives until the close of the meeting.

3.6.2 Agency Scoping Meeting

The agency scoping meeting provided an opportunity for federal, state, and local agencies to learn about the SVFE, discuss the project in a workshop format, and provide information relevant to their agencies' focus and expertise. The meeting was held on Wednesday, May 7, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the SNWA. The meeting followed the same format and presented the same information as was provided for the public scoping meetings. Invitations were mailed to 36 separate departments and divisions of federal, state, and local agencies. The City of Henderson, City of Las Vegas, and Clark County Department of Aviation were represented at the meeting in addition to representatives from Reclamation, BLM, NPS, and the SNWA.

3.7 Other Consultation

3.7.1 Native American Tribal Consultation

Native American tribes were notified of the scoping process and invited to participate in the public scoping meetings. The public scoping notice letter was sent to council representatives of the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, Hualapai Indian Tribe, Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, Havasupai Tribe, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Moapa Band of Paiutes, and Pahrump Paiute Tribe, and to the Las Vegas Indian Center. Further consultation with Native American tribes is being conducted by Reclamation as part of its obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

3.7.2 Fish and Wildlife Service Consultation

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was notified of the scoping process and invited to participate in the public scoping meetings and the agency scoping meeting. The USFWS submitted a comment letter describing federally-listed threatened and endangered species and other locally rare or protected species that may occur in the SVFE project area or be affected



by the construction or operation of the project. In response to this letter and with concurrence from Reclamation, the SNWA is conducting biological surveys for rare, threatened, and endangered species that may be affected. The results of the surveys will be described in a Biological Evaluation that will support the preparation of the EIS. Potential effects on federally-listed species will be described in a Biological Assessment that will be used by Reclamation in conducting formal consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

4.0 SCOPING SUMMARY

The public scoping process provided sufficient opportunity for federal, state, and local agencies, businesses, interested organizations, and members of the general public to express their comments and provide meaningful input to the EIS process. Reclamation provided adequate notice of the scoping period and offered different venues for the public to learn about the SVFE and the EIS process and to provide their input. Written comments were received at each of the scoping meetings and by Reclamation via mail, fax, and email. Although the official scoping period closed on May 23, 2008, Reclamation will consider issues brought forward throughout the EIS process. Comments submitted during the scoping period and received prior to June 6, 2008 are summarized in this report.

A database was created to capture comments based on 21 categories including 4 NEPA process categories and 17 affected environment categories listed in Table 3. These categories are used to verify that the issues identified during the scoping process are addressed in the EIS. When a comment letter identified several areas of concern or issues, each issue (comment) was entered individually in the representative category. The list of the letters and summary of comments are provided in Appendix G.

A total of 78 written comment letters were received from federal, state, and local agencies, businesses, organizations, homeowner associations, and individuals. A total of 414 individual comments and/or issues were raised. The written comments were reviewed and placed into the 21 categories. Comments containing similar wording on particular issues were entered into the database as individual records. Table 3 lists the comment categories and the number of comments received in each category. It is important to note that the volume of comments does not affect the level of consideration an issue or concern receives in the EIS process.

There were 28 copies of a form letter received from the public. One set of comments from the form letter was included in the database. Each author submitting the form letter was entered in the database and each comment on the form letter was counted as a separate comment for each author. If there were individual comments entered on the form letter, the comments were entered separately in the database and counted in the summary.

The comment letters in their entirety are included in Appendix H. Names and contact information of individual respondents who requested confidentiality are not available. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, are available for public inspection in their entirety.

The comments and/or issues were placed into categories and further divided into three areas for analysis:

- Issues to incorporate in the development and analysis of alternatives,
- Issues to address in the EIS, or
- Issues beyond the scope of the EIS.

**Table 3**

Number of Comments by Category

Category	Number of Individual Comments
NEPA Process	
Project Description / Purpose and Need	7
Alternatives	6
Outside Scope of EIS, including Alternative Preference	15
Cumulative Impacts	0
Affected Environment	
Air Quality	34
Biological Resources	76
Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns	2
Environmental Justice	0
Geology, Topography, and Soils	35
Hazardous Materials	0
Indian Trust Assets	0
Land Use	6
Noise and Vibration	35
Paleontological Resources	0
Public Services	0
Recreation	72
Socioeconomics	63
Transportation and Traffic	8
Utilities	8
Visual Resources	44
Water Resources	3

4.1 Issues to Incorporate in the Development and Analysis of Alternatives

Comments suggesting project alternatives included:

- An alignment that tunnels under the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area.
- An alignment that trenches through Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area along the proposed McCullough Pass Road/Trail or other alignment.
- An alignment that tunnels entirely from Lake Mead to the center of the valley.
- An alignment that pipes the water over the River Mountains.



4.2 Issues to Address in the EIS

This section briefly discusses the issues identified in the comments made regarding specific resources that will be addressed in the EIS.

4.2.1 Project Description/Purpose and Need

Discuss project financing.

Discuss if the project would provide system redundancy or facilitate new growth.

4.2.2 Air Quality

Evaluate the potential impacts on local air quality, adjacent residences, and businesses during construction from fugitive dust.

Evaluate the potential impacts on local air quality, adjacent residences, and businesses during operation and maintenance of the project facilities.

Evaluate the potential impacts on local air quality, adjacent residences, and businesses of dust resulting from a lack of revegetation of the construction area.

4.2.3 Biological Resources

Evaluate impacts to vegetation, wildlife, and habitat, including:

- Potential impacts to threatened, endangered, or special status species.
- Potential impacts to all wildlife species.
- Potential loss of habitat and migration of wildlife into urban areas.
- Potential fragmentation of the habitat of threatened, endangered, or special status species.
- Potential to introduce or increase non-native invasive species.
- Comparison of impacts to biological resources resulting from the implementation of alternatives.
- Develop avoidance and mitigation measures to protect vegetation, wildlife, and habitat.
- Potential impacts to areas currently being used as mitigation in the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, including the River Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

4.2.4 Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns

Evaluate the potential project impacts to the cultural value of the River Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern.



4.2.5 Geology, Topography, and Soils

Evaluate the impacts of ground disturbance from construction activities.

Evaluate the damage to hillsides from project construction activities.

4.2.6 Land Use

Evaluate the effects of construction activities and facilities in proximity to homes and businesses.

Evaluate effects on the Clark County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Conservation Management Categories.

Identify the types of ownership of parcels utilized for project facilities, rights-of-way, and easements.

Evaluate the feasibility of the construction of project facilities near houses.

Evaluate the impacts to airports from construction of facilities near the ends of runways.

4.2.7 Noise and Vibration

Evaluate project-related construction noise, including noise from blasting, equipment, and vehicles that would adversely impact residences and businesses.

Evaluate project-related vibration that may damage the structural integrity of residential and other structures.

4.2.8 Recreation

Evaluate the removal of existing hiking trails.

Evaluate project effects on access to hiking trails and recreational facilities.

Evaluate the project-induced delays on park and trail completion efforts.

Consider the use of maintenance roads for bike paths.

4.2.9 Socioeconomics

Evaluate the impacts to businesses along the project corridor.

Evaluate project impacts on property values.

Disclose the project financing and the obligation to existing and future customers.

Evaluate the safety of a reservoir constructed on a hillside.

**4.2.10 Transportation and Traffic**

Evaluate traffic impacts from the project construction and operation.

Evaluate the effects of the north alignment through the Valley Electric Corridor, which is a designated Safe Route to School zone.

Evaluate the project construction and maintenance effects on the operation of the Henderson Airport.

4.2.11 Utilities

Evaluate project impacts on water utilities, particularly the capacity of the third intake to meet future needs.

Evaluate the pumping capacities and supplies at Lake Mead.

Evaluate the energy use for pumping water.

Evaluate the general impacts on electrical utilities.

Consider the project impacts on existing and future planned utilities and utility corridors.

4.2.12 Visual Resources

Evaluate the visual impacts of construction and facility development on views of Black Mountain.

Evaluate the impacts to scenic values in the City of Henderson and in the River Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

4.2.13 Water Resources

Evaluate construction impacts on ephemeral washes and other waters.

Discuss the viability of the project should water levels drop in Lake Mead.

4.3 Issues Outside the Scope of the EIS

Comments were received that were beyond the scope of the SVFE EIS because the comments were general in nature or were unrelated to the SVFE project. Comments that are outside the scope of the EIS include:

- Statements of overall support or opposition to the project without citing concerns on specified environmental impacts.
- Statements that the project would have an adverse impact on property values without providing a reason(s) or justification.
- Statements of elected official accountability if the SVFE proceeds.

The CEQ regulations implementing NEPA provide guidance as to content of NEPA documents and impact analysis. Specifically, 40 CFR Section 1501.7 allows for issues to be identified and eliminated from



detailed study which are not considered significant, and 40 CFR Part 1502.22 requires agencies to identify issues that can be addressed provided that the analysis is not based on conjecture. Based on this guidance, it was determined that the above issues are based on conjecture and therefore outside the scope of this EIS.

5.0 FUTURE ACTIONS

The information gathered during the scoping process will be used by Reclamation in the development of alternatives for the EIS and identification of resources and issues to be analyzed.

Public hearings will be held after issuing the Draft EIS to receive comments on the contents of the document. The time, date, and location of these hearings will be published in the Federal Register, on the Reclamation website, and mailed to those on the mailing list. Notices will be sent to the media.

Reclamation welcomes comments from the public at any time during the NEPA process. Reclamation, BLM, and the SNWA are distributing postcards to be completed and returned to Reclamation by individuals interested in being included on the EIS mailing list.

Additional information will be provided periodically in project newsletters to keep the public informed on the status and findings of the EIS effort. Newsletters will be posted on the Reclamation website and mailed to those on the mailing list. Newsletters will discuss the EIS alternatives, the EIS findings, release of the Draft EIS, the results of public review of the Draft EIS, and the release of the Final EIS and the Record of Decision.

Information on the SVFE EIS will be posted to the Lower Colorado Region website (<http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/g2000/envdocs.html>). In addition to the documents currently posted, it is anticipated the following documents will be available for download from this site:

- Scoping Report
- News releases
- Newsletters
- Draft EIS
- Final EIS
- Record of Decision

The NPS and BLM, as cooperating agencies, will provide a link on their websites to Reclamation's Environmental Documents page.

To obtain a copy of this Scoping Report, submit written comments, or for general questions, please contact Ms. Lauren Perry (LC-2631), Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado Region, PO Box 61470, Boulder City, Nevada 89006-1470, or by e-mail at svfe-eis@lc.usbr.gov.